

## Chapter 5, Al-Maidah (The Feast) (part 1 of 3)

**Description:** A brief commentary of Chapter 5 of the Quran. It discusses food, hunting, the pledges made by the Jews and Christians, the afterlife, and the feast of Jesus.

By Imam Mufti (© 2017 IslamReligion.com)

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### Introduction

The chapter relates to food, and a central theme is the regulation of lawful and unlawful food, obedience to which is considered as part of the pledge between God and the believers. It also talks about hunting for food during the pilgrimage. God had also taken pledges from the Jews and Christians and the chapter deals with what they did to their pledges. Some passages deal with the



afterlife and the verdict of the messengers on the behavior of their communities. Jesus is mentioned when his disciples asked him to pray to God and of his renouncing any claim to divinity.

### Verses 1-6 Legislation of contracts, offerings to God, pilgrims, and inviolable months, food, ritual bath, ablution, and dry ablution

Fulfil your obligations.

You are forbidden to hunt while you are on pilgrimage, but when you have completed the rites of pilgrimage you may hunt. Do not let your hatred for some people make you to break the law. Help one another to do what is right and do not help one another towards sin.

You are forbidden to eat carrion, blood, pig's meat, any animal over which any name other than God's has been taken, and anything sacrificed on altars. Also, any permissible animal that is strangled, or is a victim of a violent blow or fall, or is gored or savaged by a beast of prey, is also forbidden unless you are able to slaughter it before its death.

Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chosen for you Islam as your religion. If any of you is forced by hunger to eat forbidden food, with no intention of doing wrong, then God is most forgiving!

The food of the Jews and Christians is lawful for you as your food is lawful for them. So are chaste Jewish and Christian women if you marry them, not taking them as lovers or secret mistresses.

God does not wish to place any burden on you: He only wishes to cleanse you and perfect His blessing on you, so that you may be thankful.

## **Verses 7 " 32 God's covenant, favors, and command of doing justice, some conditions of the People of the Book, Moses' experience with the Jews, Adam's two sons, and inviolability of the human soul**

Faith is the vow that binds God and His subjects. The subject vows that he will remain aware of God in his life and God guarantees that He will be His subject's guardian in this world and in the life to come. God's subject must prove his fulfillment of vows in two ways.

First, he stays steadfast on the path of God. On every occasion, he should give the response expected of a subject to his Lord. When he observes the universe, his mind should be filled with the realization of God's glory and power. When he looks at himself, he should realize that his existence is entirely due to God's grace and His mercy. If his emotions erupt, they should erupt for the sake of God. If his attention is focused on anybody, it should be on God. His fears should be linked with God. The remembrance of God should be uppermost in his mind. He should be given to prayer and obedience to God and should spend his assets for the cause of God.

Second, for the fulfillment of the vow of God's subject is that his dealings with his fellow-beings should be based on justice and fair play. Justice means meting out to a person that treatment which he deserves " no more and no less. In his dealings, he should follow the dictates of justice and not his desires. He should be bound by this principle to the extent that he should adhere to justice even when dealing with his enemies; even when grievances and bitter memories are apt to divert him from the path of justice.

A pledge was taken from the Children of Israel by their prophet that they would lead a godly life, and twelve chiefs from their twelve tribes were appointed to keep a watch over them. The pledge taken from the Children of Israel was they would make themselves godly by offering salat (prayers), that they would discharge the rights of others in the shape of zakat (obligatory charity), align themselves on the side of God by supporting His prophets, and spend their assets in support of the struggle for the religion of God. It was only after undertaking all this and after establishing a collective system among themselves for ensuring the continued fulfillment of these duties that they were entitled to God's company and support. One attains Paradise by performing good deeds and not due to any racial relationship.

The People of the Book went astray by omitted some teachings from their religion by means of deliberate misinterpretation or distortion. They also imposed upon themselves

restrictions which had not been ordained by God.

Considering any community as God's favorite is a meaningless thought. Everybody will get his reward before God according to his deeds. Every man's future will be decided based on his performance in this world of test and trial. Neither Paradise nor Hell is the native place of any community.

Cain was instructed by means of a crow how to bury the dead body under the ground. This points to the fact that man was less knowledgeable than the animals about the ways of nature.

When one person kills another, he is the killer of not only one person but of all human beings because he contravenes the law of respect for human life upon which the lives of all human beings depend.

## Chapter 5, Al-Maidah (The Feast) (part 2 of 3)

**Description:** A brief commentary of Chapter 5 of the Quran. It discusses food, hunting, the pledges made by the Jews and Christians, the afterlife, and the feast of Jesus.

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### Verses 33-40 Ordained punishments, punishment of highway robbery, fearing God and drawing close to Him versus disbelieving in Him, punishment of theft, and repentance

The principle on which God has created the system of this world is that everybody should discharge his duty and nobody should unnecessarily interfere in the sphere of others.



Human beings have been given clear instructions through prophets, but they have been given a free will with which to act righteously or to rebel. Those who declare war against God and His prophet are terrible criminals. Such people indulge in acts of terrorism. For them there is a terrible punishment in this world and an all-consuming fire in the Hereafter.

The greatest achievement for man is nearness to God. The way to attain this nearness is through *taqwa* (fear of God or piety), i.e. becoming a worshiper or devotee of God

through fear of God and struggling to make efforts for His cause. He has to surrender his ego, tolerating every difficulty and unpleasantness; he moves ahead towards God.

The punitive system in Islam for social crimes has two special aspects: one is punishment for a man's crime and the other is the deterrent effect of that punishment. However, if the criminal is truly repentant, seeks God's pardon and completely refrains from such misdemeanors in future, then God may forgive him in the Hereafter.

## **Verses 41-50 Obligation to judge by what God has revealed, Jews and the Torah, Jesus and the Gospel, Muhammad and the Quran**

In Madina there were two kinds of people who opposed the Islamic mission " the hypocrites and the Jews. The hypocrites, feeling that the real Islamic mission was harmful to their success and purposes, merely put on a show of having adopted Islam. The Jews for their part, felt that the Islamic mission was pulling them down from their position. Therefore, they joined hands in running a campaign against Islam. They used to twist the meaning of the Prophet's words to defame him and his mission. Their attitude was to accept only whatever suits their interests. Such people desert God and God deserts them.

The servant of God, who has arisen with the message of God's true religion, should not be discouraged by opposition. The activity against God can never be successful.

There were ancient religious scholars who used to give false decrees and opinions after taking bribes. However, a worse form of corruption is distorting the provisions of the religion by opportunists to suit popular tastes so that they may have honor and glory conferred upon them by the admiring public and receive contributions and offerings from all.

The ancient Jewish leaders had become a center of attraction for the people by dispensing this type of religion. Raising the voice of truth seemed intolerable to them, as this amounted to the demolition of the structure of their vested interests. They would spread bad news about him with interest and their own additions.

The purpose of God's Book was to guide people to the way of eternal welfare and to bring them out of the darkness of desire-worship into the light of true worship. The God-fearing consider the Book of God as a sacred covenant between God and His subjects and they know that they cannot increase in the benefits it confers or lessen in any way the strictness of its ordinances.

In connection with justice it is the requirement of Islamic law that its rules should be enforced without considering any individual's status. Sometimes a man's violence is not the result of mischievous intent, but occurs accidentally under the influence of emotional stress. Under such circumstances, if the victim pardons the perpetrator that will be deemed an act of magnanimity towards the latter.

With the passage of time, the internal reality of religion is lost and public rituals and

formal ceremonies assume the strength of the internal reality, eventually becoming 'holy.' That is why God has changed the external framework from time to time so that mentality of considering the framework the real substance of religion is eradicated and God alone should be the center of one's attention.

The bearers of the previous scriptures could not preserve them in their original form, therefore, God revealed the Quran, the authentic expression of His will.

## **Verses 51-86 Muslims allies are God, His Messenger, and the true believers, practices and beliefs of the People of the Scripture, exceeding the limits in religion and following whims, a positive and negative example**

The truly faithful people are those whose entire beings are so pervaded by Faith that they develop a relation with God at the level of love. Fulfillment of Islamic objectives is so dear to them and there is nothing but sympathy and kindness in their hearts for their brothers in Islam. Islamic life is one of purpose and struggle. It is the mission of a Muslim to convey the religion of God to people, guiding the world to keep away from the path leading to Hell and to tread the path leading to Paradise.

Those who claim on the basis of a self-made religion to have a monopoly of devotion to God develop extreme aversion to it and lose all sense of rationality. The result is that they consider pure Muslims to be criminals and blatantly hold their dealings as absolutely fair.

What prevents a man from following the dictates of his desires is his moral fiber. When obstinacy and enmity dominate him, his ability to think becomes suppressed and there is nothing to combat the pressure of his desires.

There were two types of prominent Jews, the rabbis and 'holy' men, who remained busy in the work of religion. The secret of their leadership was their presentation of a popular version of religion rather than the true religion favored by God. The favored religion of God is that of *taqwa*. In other words, a man should live in society in such a way that he does good deeds and refrains from sin.

The idea that God is poor with empty Hands and His subjects are rich is false. The root cause of all waywardness is man's reckless bravado. But once a man fears God, he immediately understands the power emanating from Him and his bravado vanishes.

Because of wishful thinking, the members of the Jewish community were convinced of their salvation before God. What carries weight with God is carrying out His commands and founding one's life on His religion.

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**Description:** A brief commentary of Chapter 5 of the Quran. It discusses food, hunting, the pledges made by the Jews and Christians, the afterlife, and the feast of Jesus.

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## Verses 87-108 Good things which God has made lawful, ruling on oaths, wine, gambling, and some other prohibited practices, hunting, directions to the believers, testimony at the time of bequest

Forbidding good things that God has made lawful is not a sign of piety. Being excessive is displeasing to God, but consuming good food in moderation is perfectly fine. God does not take us to account for breaking thoughtless oaths.



God forbids alcoholic beverages, gambling, and divination to believers and calls them Satan's doing.

God asks to obey Him and His messenger and to be on guard, but if people chose not to pay heed, then the messenger is only supposed to deliver the message clearly. Those who believe and do good deeds cannot be blamed for what they consumed in the past as long as they are mindful of God, have proper belief, and follow it with good works. After all, God loves those who do good.

No one is allowed to hunt while performing pilgrimage to Mecca. Anyone who kills a game intentionally must atone for it. Catching and eating seafood is nevertheless allowed. God is merciful and at the same time severe in punishment.

The duty of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, is to deliver the message, not to force people to accept it. Good and bad are not the same. Too much questioning of matters might make things difficult; God's silence sometimes is because He is forgiving and forbearing.

When asked to surrender to God's revelation, people are said to use their reason, but

they tend to follow the path of their ancestors. You are responsible for yourself if you believe.

Leave a will before death.

## **Verses 109-120: Questioning messengers on the Day of Resurrection about the people's responses, reminder of miracles of Jesus and the story of the table, dialogue between Jesus and His Lord on the Day of Resurrection, good consequences of the truthful**

As such, this passage aims to establish the truth about God and servitude to Him as conceived by Islam. This truth is presented through a great scene portrayed here in which Jesus speaks in front of all of God's messengers and rest of humanity. The chapter presents this truth in a vivid scene taken from the Day of Judgement in the same way as the Quran presents various scenes of that great Day. In all such presentations, the picture is portrayed in such an inspiring, vivid and effective way that we almost see it before our very eyes. We hear what is being said and feel every reaction and response.

God will ask the prophets he sent to people as to what response they got. Jesus will be reminded of God's favors and miracles he performed with God's permission: speaking to people from the cradle, knowledge of the Scripture, the Torah, and the Gospel, and wisdom, making birds out of clay that would turn alive when Jesus breathed into them, healing the blind and the leper, bringing the dead back to life, protection when people tried to harm him when he showed them signs, and the disciplines believing in him and devoting themselves to God.

The disciples requested Jesus to ask God to send down a feast for them from heaven. Jesus warned them, to which they responded that they simply wish to eat and to have their hearts reassured and that he has told them the truth and be witnesses to it. Jesus then prayed to the Lord to send down a feast from the heaven. God accepted the prayer of Jesus, but cautioned that anyone who disbelieves after seeing the sign will be given an exemplary punishment.

On the Final Day, God will ask Jesus if he demanded people to worship him and his mother, Mary, in his earthly ministry. God knows very well what Jesus said to people. But this worrying interrogation on that fearful Day is intended for people other than the one to whom it is addressed.

Jesus will plead innocence and will state that he never did and had no business asking people to worship him. Had he done so, God would have known as He knows everything unseen. Jesus' answer is tinged with awe and fear. He starts by glorifying God and follows this immediately with an absolute denial of any such thoughts or of any such claims. Jesus will declare that he said nothing to his community other than calling on them to worship God alone, and stating that, like them, he is no more than God's servant. He will then disclaim any responsibility for what they did after the end of his time on

earth. Jesus will conclude with leaving the fate of his people absolutely to God, stating at the same time that they are His servants and at His disposal. God can forgive them or punish them. Whether He decides on one course or the other, that decision is based on His wisdom.

"This is the Day when the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness." This is God's word at the end of that interrogation beheld by all creatures. It is the final and decisive word. It is coupled with the reward that befits truthfulness and those who are truthful.

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